

CALDONIA



Released in 1945, the 18-minute short film *Caldonia* showcased the talents of singer, saxophonist, and bandleader Louis Jordan (1908-1975).

In *Caldonia*, Louis Jordan, playing himself, is lured to New York by Felix Paradise, who promises him a film career. In the process, Jordan loses a promising Hollywood contract and *Caldonia*, his girlfriend. The short film features four songs by Louis Jordan and his Tympany Five: “Buzz Me,” “*Caldonia*,” “Honey Chile,” and “Tillie.”

Known as “King of the Jukeboxes” or “King of the Bobby Sox Brigade,” Jordan began his career playing big band swing jazz music during the 1930s but later became one of the leading players of “jump blues,” a hybrid of jazz, blues, and other elements that included a smaller band, humorous lyrics, and a strong rhythm section. A celebrity who appeared in numerous movies, Jordan was one of the top American recording artists of the 1940s and 1950s. He was known as “the father of rhythm and blues.” He is also remembered as one of the first black recording artists to achieve “crossover” appeal with white audiences.

Although first shown together, the musical performances in *Caldonia* were also separated into individual “soundies.” Soundies were short films that were played on video jukeboxes in nightclubs and restaurants during the 1940s. Today they are especially remembered for featuring performances by African-American artists, and Louis Jordan is often cited for his prominent role in these precursors to today’s music videos.

The poster for *Caldonia* features a photograph of Louis Jordan carrying his saxophone around his neck and wearing a top hat and a zoot suit with a bow tie, pink topcoat, and burgundy-and-yellow striped pants. Three smaller photographs of women appear in the lower right. The title of the film appears at the bottom of the poster. Captions on the poster refer to Jordan as “KING OF THE BOBBY SOX BRIGADE / IN A JIVE AN’ JAM PACKED MUSICAL.” A box in the lower left reads: “HEAR HIM / SING / ‘HONEY CHILE’ / ‘BUZZ ME’ / ‘TILLIE’ / ‘CALDONIA.’” The poster slogan “HERE COMES MR. LOUIS JORDAN” is a humorous reference to the film *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, an Oscar-winning 1941 film about a saxophone-playing boxer who returns from Heaven for a second chance to win the championship.